



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FACT SHEET

MAYOR SANDERS CALLS FOR RESUMPTION OF CITY'S CLEAN SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

PROGRAM GEARED TO REDUCE HEPATITIS C AND HIV TRANSMISSION ***ISSUE HEADED TO CITY COUNCIL ON JULY 11***

Mayor Jerry Sanders today announced his support for the resumption of the City's Clean Syringe Exchange Program (CSEP) in an effort to reduce the transmission of Hepatitis C and HIV through the sharing of syringes. Council President Scott Peters has docketed the issue for City Council consideration on Tuesday, July 11.

The program, which began operation as a pilot project in July 2002 after approval by the City Council, was discontinued when the votes were no longer present to support the bi-weekly State of Emergency needed to keep the program running following the resignation of three members of the City Council, each of whom had supported the program.

Under a new state law, a continuing State of Emergency is no longer needed to keep a CSEP in operation. A simple Council majority can both start up the project as well as cease its operation. An annual report to the City Council on the status of the project is mandated by the new law.

The Objectives of a Clean Syringe Exchange Program:

- Reduce the transmission of Hepatitis C and HIV caused by the sharing of syringes.
- Educate substance abusers about the perils of drug use and test them for various diseases.
- Refer individuals to drug treatment and other necessary services.

San Diego Statistics That Underscore the Need for a Clean Syringe Exchange Program:

Data reported by SANDAG (2005) demonstrate the continued need in San Diego for a clean syringe exchange program that provides education and referrals to health and social services:

- 72% of female and 69% of male arrestees in San Diego tested positive for any illicit drug in 2004, the highest percentages over the previous five years.
- About 30% of arrestees reported using prescription drugs illegally.
- 30% of arrestees who injected drugs reported sharing their needles/syringes.

Source: SANDAG, Aug. 2005. *2004 Adult Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region*. Criminal Justice Research Division; SANDAG. <http://www.sandag.org>

There are an estimated 15,000 to 18,000 injection drug users, out of an estimated 200,000 people who abuse drugs and alcohol, living in San Diego County. There are only approximately 4,000 alcohol and drug treatment and recovery slots, and only 50 detoxification slots in the entire county.

Source: Alcohol and Drug Services, County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, 2001.

The County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency reports there are:

- 5,864 people living with AIDS
- An estimated 9,979 cases of HIV, with 2,190 (22%) unaware they are HIV positive
- 3,321 people living with hepatitis C

Source: San Diego County HHSA. *HIV/AIDS Epidemiology Report, 2006*.

State Law:

Effective January 1, 2006, California state law AB 547 (Health and Safety Code sections 121349 through 121349.3) was enacted that eliminated the requirement for local jurisdictions to declare a State of Emergency to adopt syringe exchange programs.

Between July 2002 and July 2005, the City of San Diego declared a public health state of emergency under which the CSEP operated. With AB 547, a county or city can authorize a clean syringe exchange program with an annual report presented to the authorities. The program is then on-going until the local jurisdiction decides to terminate program.

Benefits of the Program:

The new law finds and declares that scientific data from syringe exchange programs in the U.S. and Europe have shown that the exchange of used needles and syringes for clean needles and syringes:

- Curtails the spread of HIV infection and Hepatitis C among the intravenous drug user population
- Serves as an important bridge to treatment and recovery from drug abuse
- Reduces the risk to the police, emergency personnel and the general public of needle sticks from contaminated syringes discarded in streets, parks, beaches and other public places.

As part of the pilot CSEP in the City of San Diego, SANDAG conducted an evaluation of the program. Evaluation results demonstrated:

- Significantly fewer intravenous drug-using clients re-used or shared syringes after participation in the CSEP.
- Drug use may have declined.
- Over 63,300 dirty syringes have been removed from our streets and parks. (The program in San Diego is a strict one-for-one exchange, with a limit of 50 syringes per visit. Since the start of San Diego's CSEP in July 2002, over 348,832 dirty syringes have been collected and only 285,524 have been distributed.)
- Clean syringe programs do not increase crime in the neighborhoods where they are located (findings supported by studies from Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health).

Program Operator:

There is no fiscal impact to the City of San Diego. As the result of a grant from the Alliance Healthcare Foundation, Family Health Centers of San Diego, a non-profit organization and the largest community clinic system in San Diego County, will operate the program.

Current Locations:

The CSEP is administered from a mobile unit in three-hour sessions at two sites:

- Downtown – Thursdays, 6 pm – 9 pm
- North Park – Fridays, 10 am – 1 pm

Supportive Data:

- Over 150 U.S. cities have Clean Syringe Exchange Programs.
- Positively evaluated by reputable institutions such as:

Nationally

- Johns Hopkins University, School of Public Health
- Yale University
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- U.S. Surgeon General

Locally

- San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG)
- Supported by organizations such as:

Nationally

- U.S. Surgeon General
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- National Institutes of Health
- U.S. Conference of Mayors
- National Academy of Sciences
- American Medical Association

Locally

- San Diego County Medical Society
- San Diego City Fire Fighters Association
- San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce
- San Diego County Health Services Advisory Board